THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) and (b) Government are aware of press reports about Pakistan's suspected chemical weapons programme. However, the Pakistan Government has in an official statement stated *inter-alia* that "Pakistan has always been an ardent advocate of a complete ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons". Pakistan is a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) but is yet to ratify it. Government is hopeful that Pakistan will ratify the CWC at the earliest. India is an orginal State Party to CWC which entered into force on 29th April, 1997. The convention requires States Parties to provide certain declarations within stipulated time schedules. Accordingly, India submitted these declarations which contain details of India's chemical weapons' stocks and production facilities, as mandated by the Convention.

Burton Amendment Reducing US Aid to India

1727. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the proposed Burton Amendment, advocating reduction in aid to India by the US; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) Government are aware that, as in past years, US Congressman Dan Burton has proposed amendments to the Foreign Operations appropriations Bill. The thrust of the amendments is to limit US development assistance to India, on grounds of alleged human rights violations. Last year, a similar Burton Amendment had been resoundingly defeated.

(b) Government have categorically rejected the baseless allegations circulated by Congressman Burton to his Congressional colleagues. Government's strong opposition to such allegations have been made clear to US congressmen and Senators. Government remain alert to developments in this regard.

Meeting of ASEAN Regional forum in Kuala Lumpur

1728. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister attended a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Kuala Lumpur from July 26—29, 1997, besides the Minister of State for External Affairs who lead the Indian Delegation to the meeting at the Foreign Ministers' level, held on July 27, 1997;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held in Kuala Lumpur and the outcome thereof; and

(c) whether there was any appreciation of India's foreign policy under the "Gujral doctrine"; if so, what was the impression/significance of PM's visit among the ASEAN?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) Prime Minister did not attend the meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) held in Kuala Lumpur from July 26-27, 1997. However, Finance Minister Shri P Chidambaram led the Indian delegation which included Shri S. Sherwani, Minister of State for External Affairs.

(b) Both the Finance Minister and Minister of State for External Affairs attended the above mentioned meetings as well as held extensive bilateral talks on issues of mutual concern with leaders from countries attending the meetings. These countries include USA, Russia, China, New Zealand, Canada, apart from the the ASEAN member countries.

(c) Generally there was an appreciation of Indian foreign policy, particularly that of good neighourliness as well as our "Look-East" policy.

Final Pact Arrived at between India and Pakistan

1729. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem published in 'The Hindustan Times' (New Delhi) dated the 23rd June, 1997 under the caption "India, Pak close to final pact on all major issues"; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and details of the final pacts arrived at by India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A Joint Statement was issued in islamabad on 23 June, 1997 on the counclusion of the second round of the resumed Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan. It was decided that the two countries will address, *inter alia,* the following subjects: (a) peace and Security, including CBMs; (b) Jummu and Kashmir; (c) Siachen; (d) Tulbul Navigation Project; (e) Sir Creek; (f) Terrorism and drug trafficking; (g) Economic and Commercial Cooperation; (h) Promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields. They also agreed to set up a mechanism, including working groups at appropriate levels, to address all these issues in an integrated manner; the issues at (a) and (b) above will be dealt at the level of the Foreign Secretaries, who will also coordinate and monitor the progress of all the working groups. Both sides further agreed to take all possible steps to prevent hostile propaganda and provocative actions against each other.

The Joint Statement provides the basis for a comprehensive, constructive and sustained dialogue between India and pakistan. It is the framework under which substantive discussions would take place on various issues. We look upon it as a step forward in our efforts to engage Pakistan on a broad front with the objective of building a relationship of trust, friendship and cooperation.

Begging Rackets in Saudi Arabia Involving Indian Children

1730. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the begging racket under operation in Saudi Arabia, involving a large number of Indian children;

(b) whether some Indian children were caught begging in the holy city of Mecca;

(c) if so, the number of those children; and

(d) the details of efforts made to bring to those children back home?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the information available with the Ministry of External Affairs, during the year 1997 till date, a total of 226 Indian children, who were caught begging in Jeddah and Holy cities of Mecca and Medina were deported from Saudi Arabia in five batches, *viz.* on Jan. 13, Feb. 3, March 20, June 17 and June 24, 1997.

(d) The children during their detention prior to deportation, were visited by officials of the Consulate General of India, Jeddah at the deportation centres and necessary travel documents were issued to them for travel back to India. The first three batches of children were handed over to the respective guardians/ parents after proper identification by the local authorities in the states from which the children hailed. Of the 4th and 5th batches of children, two children were handed over to their parents at Mumbai